



AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace Paragraph [0032] with the following paragraph rewritten in amendment format:

[0032] Thin lightweight metal elements (e.g. aluminum, magnesium, and titanium) can be used to decrease the volumetric and weight gravimetric power density of the fuel cell stack. Further, lightweight metals have relatively high strength, physical durability, adherence to protective coatings, and are less expensive than many other conductive metal alternatives. However, the oxide layer at the surface impermissibly increases electrical contact resistance of the substrate, and further such metals are highly susceptible to corrosive attack. In light of such corrosion sensitivity and similar propensity for oxidation, various protective coatings are used for the metal substrate. Often such protective coatings increase the electrical resistance of the metal plate to unacceptable levels, fail to adequately protect the underlying substrate, or are very costly, such as with gold or platinum coatings. Thus, there is a trade-off between conductivity and corrosion protection. It is an object of the present invention to reduce the overall electrical contact resistance of an electrically conductive element, while providing cost-effective corrosion and oxidation resistance for the underlying metal substrate of the conductive element.